

[Mrs. John Boler]

[???] [S-341 DAK?] [DUP?]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE October 31, 1939 SUBJECT Interview No. 16

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. John Boler (Ellen) 913 S 36 St. Omaha, Nebraska
2. Date and time of interview October 31, 1938, 12:30 PM
3. Place of interview At Mrs. Boler's home, 913 S 36, Omaha
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Mrs. J. [A.?] Hall, Jackson, Nebraska
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you no one
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mrs. Boler lives with a son and three daughters in [?] Omaha, in a large white house, lovely large, airy rooms, in a very nice neighborhood. [C15 2/27/41 Nebraska?]

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE October 31, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 16

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John (Ellen) Boler, 913 South 36th St.
Omaha, Nebraska

1. Ancestry Father, James Jones Mother, Ellen Lynch Jones
2. Place and date of birth Born in Catauraugs Cataragus County, N. Y. in 1834
3. Family Three daughters and, I believe she said, three sons.
4. Place lived in, with dates New York State from birth until about 1855; Illinois until 1856, when she came to Dakota County with parents;

Dakota County [1856?] until 15 years ago when she moved to Omaha; still there
5. Education, with dates Was rather indefinite, but had a very good education for those times
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Taught school several years; married and kept house since
7. Special skills and interests nothing now except her home and family
8. Community and religious activities Member Catholic church
9. Description of Informant Mrs. Boler is, apparently, medium tall, although she was seated when I called and remained seated during interview; she has lost the sight of her right eye; is a very nice looking and nice appearing woman, pleasant and anxious to re-live her past experiences
10. Other points gained in interview Mrs. Boler is, apparently, a woman of refinement, and instead of being as she says "Almost 94 years old,"

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I would say she is almost 94 years young.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John (Ellen) Boler 913 South 36th St.
Omaha, Nebraska

In 1855 my brother, Ed C. Jones, Father Tracey, John Gannon, Herman Rosenbaum, a carpenter, and John Tracey, a blacksmith, brother of Father Tracey, came out here and located in Dakota County, near old St. Johns; later they went back to Garry Owen, near Dubuque.

The 1st day of June, 1856, two men named Coleman and Riley, from Rochester, N. Y., store keepers, came west with the next colony; they met Mr. Adam Benners at Ida Grove, Iowa, and they joined Herman Rosenbaum, John Gannon and Mr. and Mrs. Hayes, who were coming out here. The Benners were Germans, couldn't talk English. Then our folks went home and we prepared to come back while some families stayed in old St. Johns. The [Mormans?] had come through and built houses and the Benners stayed in one of those houses.

Mrs. Benners was expecting to be confined and had engaged a French woman at Sioux City to stay with her, and Mr. Benners had gone to Sioux City for this French woman. A lot of young Indians (I believe the Sioux), scouting around, came while Mr. Benners was gone. Mrs. Benners was sick when the Indians got there; they emptied the feathers from the feather tick, on to the floor and threw her out of bed; they took the tick and what was in the house and left. When Mr. Benners and the French woman came they found both Mrs. Benners and the baby dead, from exposure, and the little girl, who was only two years old,

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had crawled out to the door and was dead; the tears were frozen on her face. Mr. Benners stayed for a while but finally left.

Coleman and Riley and some of the other men went out hunting. While hunting Mr. Riley was shot. Some how Mr. Coleman got him to the river and to Rochester, and neither one came back.

I came from New York, [Ellicottsville?]; was seven when we left New York; we stopped one year in Illinois; left New York with the intention of getting land; Franklin Pierce was president of the United States and had passed a law to give people homesteads, and we thought we would get land in Illinois, so my folks came out to DeKalb County, my three brothers, two sisters, father and mother and myself. One of my brothers, Patrick A. Jones, never did come West. At one time he was a post master of New York City; he was in the Civil War; came out Brigadier General under General Grant. We rented a farm in DeKalb County, Illinois and stayed there one year, when we heard there was vacant land in Iowa.

The first year we were in Iowa we rented a farm. The colony wasnt formed yet, but in 1855 my brother came out here and the next year we came out to Nebraska.

When we left Buffalo, N. Y., we took two teams and our furniture; got on to a boat at Buffalo, on Lake Erie; landed in Chicago; then took our teams and came to DeKalb County, Illinois; We traded our horses for oxen and came by ox teams to Iowa.

When we formed our colony in Garry Owen, near Dubuque, there were about sixty people; had pretty good luck until the rains (it was in the spring); water was high and no bridge over the Des Moines River; they told us to wait until the river went down a little but our people were in such a hurry to get to Nebraska that they camped on the Des Moines River and didn't have patience to wait so they took the wagon beds and had tar (which they had with them to put on the cattle's feet as they got sore from walking so much); stuffed the cracks of the wagon beds or boxes with cloth and put the tar over that so as to make the wagon beds water tight, and used the wagon beds as boats; that was the way they got the

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goods and people across the Des Moines River; while they were taking the things across it seemed as though we were going to lose everything, but they finally landed the "boats" on the other side of the river; they swam the cattle across. By the time we got over on the other side, the Des Moines River was about down to normal.

When we left Garry Owen, that morning we had Mass, and Bishop Loras came out from Dubuque and blessed us. He said we were like Columbus, going to start a new colony, and gave us quite a puff.

Pat Twohig and Dan Duggan and his family, three children and his wife, came from Boston, looking for land; they came up the river and bought teams at Dubuque, where they joined us and came through with us.

John and Bridget Gannon, Johnny McGinn and Simeon McGann met the Hogans; the Ryans were here when we came. Mrs. Coyle and two boys and two orphan girls, Eliza and Margaret Drumm; Father Tracey and his father and Mother, John Tracey, Johnny Slattery, Jeremiah, Dennis, Cornelius and Mr. and Mrs. [Danien?] [Daniel?] Duggan came with us.

Oh! Yes! When we got across the Des Moines River they got everything across; had chickens along, and calves and [sheet?] sheep and cows. The chickens got out and we had to catch them; when we got across we camped, and it still rained and Iowa was all flooded; we camped, and every day tried to go a little further; it took us eight days to get seven or eight miles, and we never got out of sight of our first camping grounds. I still have a clock and a flat iron that my mother brought with her from Ireland.

My family consisted of my brothers, Richard, Tom, and Ed and James, Jones, my sisters, Mary, Catherine, and myself, Ellen; Catherine married Pat Twohi Twohig ; Mary married James McHenry; and I married John Boler.

When we got to Sioux City there were some Frenchmen camping; I don't remember seeing any houses in Sioux City but there was a big tent as big as this house (Mrs. Boler lives in

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a very large, two-story house), divided into different apartments like a store; on the outside of the tent they had looking glasses, tubs, and such things, for sale.

We met Mr. George G. [Portiss?] and his wife at Des Moines, and another man. Mr. [?] [Callahan?] and his wife joined our party, and we met Mr. Michael [McKivergan?] and his wife and four children, Johnny, Lawrence, Katie and Jimmie; met Michael McCormicks, Mrs.

Sarah Erlach's folks, in Des Moines, on this side of the river; they had a team; met old Pat Washburn and his boy, with one team. There were about twenty-seven teams; we had two teams; Traceys had four or five teams; we all brought cows. We didn't have any money but had plenty to eat.

As soon as the immigration came up the river there was a great rush; they came in by the hundreds to get land, but most of them didn't stay;

A man brought up a saw mill to Omadi. Omadi was bigger then than Sioux City was, but the river struck it and took it out; there was a big store at Omadi. My two brothers went down there and worked and got good pay. William McBeath, father of George McBeath of South Sioux City, was a young man and was sent up by some company in Chicago and started a store in Omadi.

There was a big flat boat at Omadi, run by John Feenan; they expected a lot of immigration but the boat wasn't quite finished; it didn't have a railing around it. I remember when we came we drove two teams on the boat and took it up the river. The men helped to push the boat up the river; had ropes from the boat to Cottonwood Hill, and men with big rubber boots walked along up the river; had ropes tied to the boat; there were lots of people and cows on the boat and when they got up to where there was good ground the men threw the ropes on the boat and let it go down the river, and we landed about where the high (railroad) bridge is and crossed there. There were a few cows on the boat and when they got across the river their calves were on the Sioux City side; [?????????] [??]

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they landed the cows but they all swam back to their calves. When the owners saw that the cows would swim they drove them across the river, and let them swim over; they were glad the cows would swim because, I think, every time the boat crossed the river it cost \$5.00.

We landed in Covington on Friday where we camped. Saturday we went to St. Johns and camped where the spring is, and all our folks were there; met the Ryans, Jim Nicholas and John; came camped there all night and in the morning Father Tracey had mass.

Our claim was taken a year before we came. The reason some of the men who came out the year before stayed, was that they were afraid some other colony would come out and take the land they had chosen. We had oxen and hauled some logs. We went to St. Johns that night and Father Tracey said not to start out until Monday, but we started and the Ryans met us. When we started from Dubuque Bishop Loras told us to hoist the cross and the flag when we got there. We had a flag (our folks were always great politicians and were working for Pierce); we took the flag and put it on the hill on old St. Johns, and that precinct has always been Democrat; and raised the cross near the flat. The hill is this side of the grave yard.

That night when went to our place, we camped there and wanted to get the logs the men had chopped to make a cabin, so father and the boys took the oxen and started toward the timber. While they were gone, in the morning we had a camp fire, sitting around it. Before the men left, we looked up [?] and there was a big Indian, with paint all over him and he had straps hanging down from his belt and feathers on his head. My brother said there was no danger and handed him a pipe and they all smoked. After he / left we weren't much afraid.

About 2 o'clock in the afternoon my brother Tom and another child, Dinnie Hogan, look out and saw a lot of Indians coming. My mother and my sister, Catherine, were afraid; we had

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a little grindstone that set outside and the Indians ground their axes and sharpened their knives; my sister turned the grindstone for them.

What we used for a table, coming through, was a camp bed and we could sleep on it at night and ate on it in the day time. My mother cooked the Indians a meal but they spit on the plates to show they were dissatisfied with the meal. They beckoned that when the corn was that high (indicating) they would come and scalp us. My mother jerked off the table cloth and gave it to my brother and told him to go out and wave the table cloth, when he would get on a hill, so the men would see it, so he rode up on to the hill and waved the table cloth. When the Indians saw him do this they left. There was more help near then we knew for because General [Barney?] was stationed quite close to us but we didnt know it.

When the men came home that night we told them about the Indians and they said they didn't think the Indians would come again, but that night they did come again. The men were very brave; all had knives and revolvers and told us to run away and hide. I had no stockings on but had shoes on; I ran down to the creek to where Ryans were camped and told them how the Indians were at our house place and we were frightened. There were two men there and they didn't let on they were afraid, so after a while the Indians all smoked and sat around and finally left, and we came back home and stayed at home; we weren't bothered again for a good while.

We were here then years when the [Wisemens?] came. Mr. Wiseman joined, the same company my brother joined, Company I, Nebraska Second, Dakota County; got up a company of soldiers to keep the Indians back, volunteers, and Mr. Wiseman was away with Company I; there was trouble above Fort Randall and had a battle at Whitestone. Mrs. Wiseman went over to Yankton to get provisions, and left the children at St. James (an extinct town which was at that time near where Wynot is now), and when she came back they were al murdered. When she came back and saw the body of one of the children in the path and as she went in the yard she heard one of the children call but she

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was so frightened she went to call for help and when she got back that child was dead. I knew her real well; she and Mr. Wiseman used to stop at our house on their way to Sioux City for provisions. They one or two children afterwards. I believe it was the Sioux Indians.

At the battle of Whitestone two [?] boys from Dakota County were killed; Ed. Freeman, from Ponca, and a boy by the name of Atwood, from Sargeant Bluffs, who came over to Dakota County and enlisted in Company I.

I always used to go to dances; when I was only a little girl they used to take me along to fill up the crowd.

We had a big log house; there was no floor in it but it was good and warm; it was covered with willows and hay, and dirt on top of that.

We didn't have to live that way very long because we got lumber from the saw mill and finished up the house and made tables and chairs. With our our first house they didnt know what to do for a door so used the bottom of the wagon box and made a door out of that, and afterwards when the saw mill ran we made a door, and made hinges out of lumber. They had no windows so they left little holes high in the walls, between the logs, and fixed up slots on each side of the hole and slipped boards in the slots when they wanted the "windows" closed. The Indians always thought we had them for portholes to shoot them when they came. In the house, along the walls, the boys had all their guns and knives hung on the walls, to show the Indians that we were prepared, but they didnt give us much trouble.

Everybody wasn't so much afraid of the Indians as we were. We were afraid because the young Indians would get the white girls. We went to Sioux City. Jackson then was alarmed and started to fix fortifications but didn't finish as the next day it was all settled, but I got a place to stay in Sioux City and stayed there five or six months and went to school.

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One night we were awfully worked up; hung blankets over the windows; were worried and tired; mother and my older sister didn't seem to be so tired, but sister Mary laid down and fell asleep. I heard someone holler and thought it was Indians, but it was the men coming home. I ran to the chicken house but thought about Mary so ran back to wake her up. Instead of [run-to? the house, I ran past the house and ran right over to a big man coming toward the house with a team of horses and a yoke of oxen. That was the time of the war, and my brothers, Ned (Ed C. Jones) and Jim, were at Vicksburg, and mother gave us what money she had, a couple hundred dollars, and we went down to St. Louis.

Ned was the first State Representative of Dakota and Cedar Counties (1857).

The first school house at old St. Johns was of logs, with a fire place made of sods; it had a window and had a rough table made of boards; didn't have desks; we used slates. Rosana Clark was our first teacher. There was a good school in Sioux City; Mr. Wright taught the High School.

I was the first person to cross the Combination Bridge; papa (Mr. Boler) wanted something at Sioux City and I went after it. When I got to Covington Mrs. J. A. Hall, now of Jackson, who kept a store at Covington then, said "If you tie your horse here you can cross on the new bridge. It opened today." So I tied my horse there and it was easier to walk on the bridge than to [?] cross on the ferry as the ferry was down the river quite a ways. Then I walked up the approach of the bridge there a chain across the bridge, but I stooped down and dodged under the chain and started to walk across. It was all finished except one board. A man laid the board down and I walked across. When I got what Mr. Boler wanted and took it and started back across the bridge, they had raised the chain and there was a team crossing.

I used to ride horse back, side wise. With a girt around the horse's body I could slip my hand under the girt and hold on and ride any place. I didn't have to have the girt on the horse but could ride without a strap if I was pinched. I had an old horse; he ran away with

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me one day. He was out grazing; I got some corn to catch him, threw it down at his head and when he stooped down to eat the corn I got on his neck and before I had slid down on his back he ran away with me and I had a hard time stopping him.

I was always a swift walker. When the folks wanted to raise the house they sent me to the neighbors for help, and they weren't close neighbors, either. When I got back with help then sent me to town, afoot, for nails. I walked about 3 1/2 miles to school in Dakota County. In Sioux City and Vermillion, South Dakota, I boarded closer. They had a splendid school in Sioux City.

My father's [claim?], near what is now Willis, was the first claim in Dakota County.

A man by the name of Collins came up to our house and asked if he could stay a week or so with us and my mother, Mrs. James Jones, said "Yes." Mrs. Coyle, a widowed sister of the priest, had a claim but she had gone away for a little while. Collins brought up a load of lumber [???] to put on her place, and when [?] passed Jackson the people of Jackson knew he was going to jump some place and made him unload. He came up to our place and went up stairs in our house. Our stair way was like a ladder, laying up against the wall. He heard the men outside and pulled the ladder up. I remember that night. Father and mother were in bed and the dogs barked. We were afraid of Indians; father looked out and said there were four yoke of oxen coming. The neighbors asked, was Collins here, and father said "Yes." The spokesman said "Bring him down here; we're going to hang him." Father got his revolver and said "I guess not" and they said if Collins didn't come down they would set the house afire. Of course they wouldn't have hung him, but he didn't know it at that time.

I taught in our old home school. We sang war songs mostly. I remember one song that one of my teachers used to sing: "I'll paddle my own canoe; I'll work all day as hard as I can; I'll do what I have to do. I'll never sit down with a tear or a frown; I'll paddle my own canoe."

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When the women would go to visit each other, after talking a while, they would all sing; guess you would call in community singing now.

I have cooked in a fire place; have cooked with cobs and wood in an iron stove; have cooked on a kerosene stove, with a gasoline stove, with gas, and with an electric stove. Have baked bread in a round kittle, with an iron lid; we would pull out the coals, put the kittle in the coals, put the lid on and cover it with the coals, and that is the way we would bake in a fire place.

Will H. Ryan was one of my scholars.

Mrs. Capt. o'Connor has the ballot box used at the first election of which there is any record, which was held in 1858.

I came to Dakota County on June 1st, [1856?] and Mr. Boler and his folks came on June 17th, of the same year.

We had to borrow money, and paid 40 per cent for it. My sister, Mary was the first teacher at Ponca, and got \$10.00 a month, and helped to keep us until the boys went to war. I had one brother who went south and was in business and was in the Rebel Army. He came home in his Rebel uniform and mother dyed it and he work it out.

We used to make cream cheese and sold it for 25 cents a pound, about the same price it is now.

In one way were lucky; we were never sick.

Charley Rulo brought the saw mill to Omadi.

Wild Turkeys had a regular path across from the timber in to our grove. Once my brother killed two with one shot, they were so plentiful.

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My sister and I used to try to keep the wild geese out of our garden.

We never saw any buffalo, but where we built our house we saw tracks where the mother buffalo would walk around and around her baby calf until it was old enough to go on, and they would join the herd. The tracks were so deep in the ground that they could be seen the next year.